

I claim:

1. A method of providing advertising services to a user of pre-paid communications services via a first communications unit capable of two-way audio communications, comprising:
  - (a) receiving a personal identifier input from the user of the first communications unit;
  - (b) determining based on the personal identifier if the user is authorized to communicate with a further communication unit;
  - (c) sending a first message advertising a service to the first communications unit based on the personal identifier;
  - (d) receiving a reply in response to the first message indicating whether the user wants to receive further information about the offered service.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - (e) in response to the reply of step (d), putting the first communications unit in communication with a provider of further information about the offered service.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - (e) putting the first communications unit in communication with the further communications unit; and
  - (f) after the first communications unit has ceased communications with the further communications unit, putting the first communications unit in communication with a provider of further information about the offered service.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the first communications unit is a telephone, the personal identifier is a personal identification number (PIN), step (b) further comprising determining in a server, based on the PIN, whether the user is authorized to communicate with the further communications unit and, if authorized, what content to send to the first communications unit as the first message.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein step (c) comprises sending an audio spot advertisement containing information about a product offer.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the offered service is an offer to sell a product and the audio spot advertisement includes identification of a prompt signal to use if further information is wanted by the user, and step (d) comprises receiving the prompt signal as the reply, and placing the user in communications with a customer service entity to provide the further information about the product.
7. The method of claim 4, wherein the first message is only sent once during a communications session.
8. The method of claim 4, wherein multiple audio spot ads are used as the content and each of the multiple audio spot ads is only sent one time during a predetermined period.
9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of saving use information about each of the multiple spot ads sent in connection with the PIN.
10. The method of claim 4, wherein multiple audio spot ads are used as the content, and comprising the further steps of sending a prompt as an indication that the user wants to be sent a further audio spot ad, receiving a prompt reply in response to the prompt, and sending the further audio spot ad to the first communications unit.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the further audio spot ad is a longer message about the same product as the first message.
12. A system for selectively providing advertising to a user of prepaid communications services, comprising:
  - (a) a user data store, capable of storing and retrieving remaining value information for personal identifiers;
  - (b) an ad data store, capable of storing and providing ad information in response to a communications request including at least one personal identifier; and
  - (c) a network communications processor, in communications with the user data store and ad data store, capable of accepting a communications request including a first personal identifier from a first communications unit and determining whether to place the first communications unit in

communications with a further communications unit based on a first remaining value information of the first personal identifier, and providing a first ad from the ad data store to the first communications unit based on the first personal identifier before placing the first communications unit in communications with the further communications unit.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the first and further communications units are a first and further telephone, the first personal identifier is a PIN, and the network communications processor comprises a telephone activity management server in networked communications with the user data store and ad data store.
14. The system of claim 13, the network communications processor further comprising a switch and a response unit, wherein the switch is in networked communications with the telephone activity management server and the response unit, the response unit is in further networked communications with the telephone activity management server and the ad data store, and the switch is capable of placing the first telephone in communications with the second telephone based on the first remaining value information of the PIN.
15. The system of claim 14, wherein the telephone activity management server comprises:
  - (a) a PIN Validation Director that verifies, in response to the communications request, whether the first remaining value information of the PIN is at least a minimum predetermined value for placing the first telephone in communications with the further telephone;
  - (b) an Ad Director that forwards the first ad to the first telephone in response to a verification of the first remaining value information, and controls the switch to place the first telephone in communication with the second telephone after a prompted reply is received by the switch in response to the first ad.
16. The system of claim 13, the network communications processor further comprising a router and a response unit, wherein the switch is in networked communications with the telephone activity management server and the response unit, the response unit is in further networked communications with the telephone activity management server and the ad data store, and the router is capable of placing the first telephone in communications with the second telephone

based of the first remaining value information of the PIN, wherein the telephone activity management server comprises:

- (a) a PIN Validation Director that verifies, in response to the communications request, whether the first remaining value information of the PIN is at least a minimum predetermined value for placing the first telephone in communications with the further telephone; and
- (b) an Ad Director that forwards the first ad to the first telephone in response to a verification of the first remaining value information, and controls the router to place the first telephone in connectionless communication with the second telephone after a prompted reply is received by the router in response to the first ad.

17. The system of claim 16, further comprising an audio response unit in networked communications with the router, telephone activity management server and ad data store, the audio response unit being responsive to the Ad Director to provide the first ad to the router in a form that when received at the first telephone provides a user intelligible audio message, the audio response unit being further configured to receive audio prompt information from the first telephone and provide prompt data to the ad director.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the Ad Director operates, in response to prompt data indicating further ad information has been requested by the user, to control the router to place the user in communication with a service provider providing services promoted in the first ad.

19. A communications program for providing audio advertising to a user of a prepaid communications service, the program operable to control a network communications processor, the program comprising:

- (a) a PIN Validation Director having logic to verify, in response to a communications request from a first telephone including a PIN, whether a remaining value associated with the PIN is at least a minimum predetermined value for placing the first telephone in communications with a second telephone; and
- (b) an Ad Director having logic to forward a first ad to the first telephone in response to a verification of the first remaining value.

20. The communications program of claim 19, wherein the Ad Director has further logic to control the network communications processor to send the first ad to the first telephone after its communications with the second telephone have terminated.
21. The communications program of claim 19, wherein the Ad Director has further logic to control the network communications processor to place the first telephone in communication with the second telephone after a prompted reply is received by the network communications processor in response to the first ad.
22. The program of claim 21, further comprising:
  - (c) a Communications Monitor, having logic to monitor the communications between the first and second telephones and, when said communications terminate, to place the first telephone in communication with a service provider associated with the first ad.
23. The program of claim 22, further comprising:
  - (d) an Audio Response Routine, having logic to (i) retrieve the first ad from a data store and convert it into a form that when received at the first telephone provides a user intelligible audio message, and (ii) receive audio prompt information from the first telephone and convert it to prompt data, wherein the ad director has further logic to determine whether to place the first telephone in communication with the service provider based on the prompt data.
24. A method of providing advertising services to a user of pre-paid communications via a communications unit capable of two-way audio communications, comprising:
  - (a) entering via a user interface on the communications unit a unique identifier;
  - (b) communicating the unique identifier to a network communication processor;
  - (c) receiving at the communications unit, in response to the communicated unique identifier, a first message advertising the availability of an offered service;
  - (d) entering via the user interface a response indicating more information should be communicated to the communications unit concerning the offered service; and
  - (e) receiving at the communications unit further information about the offered service.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the first message is an audio product advertisement, and step (c) comprises communicating the audio product advertisement via a speaker of the communications unit.
26. The method of claim 24, wherein the first message includes a visual advertisement, and step (c) comprises communicating the visual advertisement via a visual display device of the communications unit.
27. The method of claim 26, wherein the visual display device is a touch screen, the first message includes a first symbol to press on the touch screen in order to receive more information, and step (d) comprises pressing the first symbol.
28. The method of claim 24, wherein the unique identifier is a PIN, the communications unit is a telephone, and step (a) comprises entering the PIN via a touchtone key pad of the telephone.
29. The method of claim 28, wherein the first message includes an indication of a first touchtone key to press in order to receive more information, and step (d) comprises pressing the first touchtone key.
30. The method of claim 28, step (b) further comprising communicating an address for the network communication processor, wherein the address and PIN are determined by the user from information on a pre-paid phone card.
31. The method of claim 28, wherein the network communication processor is a switch and step (b) further comprises communicating a toll free telephone number for the switch, wherein the telephone number and PIN are determined by the user from account information for a card.
32. The method of claim 24, further comprising: prior to step (c), entering via the user interface a destination communications unit identifier identifying a second communications unit; and after step (d) commencing communications with the second communications unit.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the first message is an audio product advertisement and the further information includes detailed purchase information about a product received from a call center, the method further comprising:
- (f) communicating an acceptance of the offered product via the user interface.
34. A method of providing advertisements to a user of pre-paid telephony services comprising:
- (a) entering via a user interface on a first phone a unique identifier and a further identifier for a second phone;
  - (b) communicating the unique identifier and further identifier to a network service provider;
  - (c) receiving a first advertisement at the first phone in response to the communicated unique identifier;
  - (d) entering a response indicating further information related to the advertisement should be communicated to the first phone;
  - (e) establishing communications with the second phone; and
  - (f) receiving at the first phone the further information.
35. The method of claim 34, wherein the unique identifier is a Personal Identification Number ("PIN"), the user interface is one of a dial pad, a telephone microphone or a touch sensitive display, and the first phone is at least one of a wireline phone or a wireless phone.
36. The method of claim 35, further comprising prior to step (a): entering a service number to establish communications with the network service provider.
37. The method of claim 36, wherein step (f) follows step (e) and further comprises placing an order for one of a product or a service in response to the further information.